

A N  
HISTORICAL ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
Origin, Progress, and Present State  
O F  
BETHLEM HOSPITAL,  
Founded by HENRY the EIGHTH,  
F O R T H E  
C U R E of L U N A T I C S,  
A N D  
Enlarged by subsequent Benefactors, for the Reception and Maintenance  
O F  
I N C U R A B L E S.



L O N D O N:  
PRINTED IN THE YEAR,  
M. DCC. LXXXIII.



TO THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL

BRASS CROSBY, Esq; ALDERMAN, PRESIDENT;

THE WORSHIPFUL

RICHARD CLARK, Esq; ALDERMAN, TREASURER;

HENRY CRANKE, Esq; AUDITOR-GENERAL;

AND THE

G O V E R N O R S

O F T H E

HOSPITALS OF BRIDEWELL AND BETHLEM,

THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT OF A CHARITY WHICH  
THEY CONDUCT WITH NO LESS HONOUR TO THEM-  
SELVES THAN BENEFIT TO THE PUBLIC IS RESPECT-  
FULLY INSCRIBED BY

THEIR MOST GRATEFUL

BRIDEWELL HOSPITAL.

JULY 10, 1783.

AND DEVOTED SERVANT

THOMAS BOWEN.



BRIDEWELL AND BETHLEM  
HOSPITALS, LONDON. { At a COURT held at the said Hospi-  
tal of BRIDEWELL, on *Wednesday*  
the 30th Day of *April*, 1783;

**R**ESOLVED unanimously, that the Thanks of the COURT, be given to the Reverend THOMAS BOWEN, for his Historical Account of BETHLEM HOSPITAL; and ordered, that the same be printed and distributed in such a Manner, as may tend most effectually to promote the Interests of that excellent Charity.

JOHN WOODHOUSE, CLERK.

A N

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

OF THE

Origin, Progress, and Present State

O F

BETHLEM HOSPITAL.

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THOSE ANCIENT FOUNDATIONS, which have been established in the city of LONDON by the munificence of our MONARCHS, for the relief and maintenance of the DISEASED POOR, have always been considered as objects worthy of public support. The care of INDIGENT LUNATICS is attended with peculiar difficulties, and, as much immediate evil must arise from the neglect of them, the community cannot but be nearly interested in the welfare and prosperity of those places which are provided for their reception. It may not therefore be thought improper to give some account of the origin, progress, and present state of Bethlem Hospital.



THE HOSPITAL OF BETHLEM owes it's name, and original establishment to the piety of a CITIZEN OF LONDON. In the year 1247, in the 39th of Henry the third, SIMON FITZ MARY, who had been sheriff, influenced by the prevailing superstition of the age, was desirous to found a religious house. Accordingly, he appropriated by a deed of gift, which is still extant, all his lands in the parish of St. BOTOLPH without BISHOPSGATE, being the spot now known by the name of OLD BETHLEM, to the foundation of a priory. The prior, canons, brethren and sisters, for whose maintenance he provided, were distinguished by a star upon their mantles, and were especially directed to receive and entertain the BISHOP OF ST. MARY OF BETHLEHEM, and the canons, brothers, and messengers of that their mother church, as often as they might come to England. Such was the original design of this foundation, a design as far short of the uses to which it has been since converted, as the contracted views of monkish hospitality are exceeded by the more enlarged spirit of PROTESTANT BENEVOLENCE.

WE hear but little more of this house for the space of two hundred years. When the vast fabric of papal superstition in England began to totter, and the votaries of ROME were expelled from their ancient retirements, it was seized by HENRY THE EIGHTH, who, in the year 1547, granted the hospital of Bethlem, with all it's revenues, to the mayor, commonalty, and citizens of London, from which time it became an HOSPITAL FOR THE CURE OF LUNATICS.



It is most probable that the city of London had felt great inconvenience from the want of a proper receptacle for those unhappy objects, who were afflicted by the most deplorable malady incident to the human frame. The retired situation of the hospital of Bethlem, and its contiguity to the city pointed it out as a fit place for the desired purpose. Accordingly, we find from authentic documents, that, in the year 1523, Stephen Gennings, merchant-taylor, gave forty pounds by will towards the purchase of this hospital, and, that the mayor and commonalty had taken some steps to procure it, a very short time before they derived their right to it from royal munificence. What were the revenues which it then enjoyed does not now appear: it is certain, they were inadequate to the necessities which they were intended to remedy; for, five years after the royal grant had passed, letters patent were issued to John Whitehead, proctor to the hospital of Bethlem, to solicit donations within the counties of Lincoln and Cambridge, the city of London, and the isle of Ely.

IN the infant state of this charity, no other provision was made for the unfortunate patient, besides confinement and medical relief. His friends, if they had ability, or the parish, of which the wretched lunatic was an inhabitant, were obliged to contribute to his support. It remained for the judicious benevolence of succeeding times to improve the good work, and to supply that comfortable subsistence, and tender care, which, through the blessing of the divine providence, have restored so many distracted objects to their families, and to society.

THERE



THERE is no account of donations received before the year 1632. They were not, for some time, considerable, but the manifest utility of the institution, and perhaps the detriment which the public suffered, soon induced them to attend to the security of those members, who, through the visitation of God, were become dangerous to the community. Accordingly, the growing charity was cherished not only by citizens, upon whose notice it more immediately pressed, but by others who had judgment to select proper objects of their attention, and ability to assist them. And here the mind, which rejoices to indulge the pleasing sensations of benevolence, cannot but feel the warmest glow, when it perceives how much the hospital of Bethlem has been indebted to secret, unknown benefactors. Private charity may not perhaps excite and animate others so much as public benefactions, but it affords the strongest recommendation of the institution which it favors. He who conceals his good deeds cannot possibly be influenced by any other than the purest motives: it is the merits of the objects only that he regards; these he weighs well before he gives his alms, and he is seldom mistaken in their application.

ABOUT the year 1644, it was under consideration to enlarge the OLD HOSPITAL; but the situation was too close and confined to allow of its being rendered a commodious asylum for the numerous distracted persons of both sexes that claimed its protection, and probably the dreadful commotions of that period checked the idea of improvement. When peace and legal government were restored, and England had rest from the violence with which it had been convulsed, the concerns of civil society were again attended to, and it became a matter of serious deliberation to build a NEW HOSPITAL.



In April 1675 this great work was begun. The lord-mayor, aldermen, and common-council of the city of London, allotted to the governors a large piece of ground near London-Wall, on the south side of the lower quarter of Moorfields, where the hospital of Bethlem now stands. The expedition, with which this stately fabric was completed, challenges our admiration. For, from an inscription over the arch facing the entrance into the hospital, it appears that it was finished in July, in the following year. So active was the zeal that quickened the growth of this noble structure! The generosity of the contributors must have been equal to their attention, for the charge of the building amounted to no less a sum than £17,000. And never, it may be truly asserted, were expence and trouble better bestowed: the hospital of Bethlem stands an illustrious monument of British charity; and, whether we consider the becoming magnificence of the building, the commodious arrangement of the interior apartments, or the effectual relief which it reaches out to the poor objects whom it shelters, we may safely pronounce, that it is not to be paralleled in the whole world.\*

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*in Paris*

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\* The design of the building was taken from the Chateau de Tuilleries, ~~at Versailles~~ Louis XIV. it is said, was so much offended that his palace should be made a model for an hospital, that, in revenge, he ordered a plan of St. James's to be taken for offices of a very inferior nature. The figures of the two lunatics over the gates of the hospital, an engraving of which is prefixed to this account, were the work of CIBBER, the father of the comedian. "My father  
" Caius Gabriel Cibber was a native of Holstein, who came into England, some time before  
" the restoration of king Charles II. to follow his profession, which was that of a statuary. The  
" basso relievo on the pedestal of the great column in the city, and the two figures of the  
" lunatics, the Raving, and the Melancholy, over the gates of Bethlem hospital, are no ill  
" monuments of his fame as an artist." *Cibber's Apology for his own Life.*

There is a tradition that the person represented by the figure of the melancholy lunatic, was porter to Oliver Cromwell.



IN the close limits within which the old hospital was confined, it was impracticable to reserve room for those forlorn beings, of whose return to the comforts of a sound mind there were no hopes. The increasing multitude of curable objects justly demanded admittance; nor did it seem reasonable that they should be excluded from the prospect of enjoying a blessing which the former could not attain. When the NEW HOUSE was erected, it was hoped that some provision might be made for such as were deemed INCURABLE, and at the same time dangerous to the public. But the great influx of insane persons, from all parts of the kingdom, into the hospital, frustrated these expectations, and gave reason to suppose, that few, if any, of its numerous apartments, would, at any time, be vacant. It was therefore found necessary to enlarge the building; a particular subscription was set on foot for the purpose, and, in the year 1734, two wings were added to the hospital. This addition of room has enabled the governors, in some degree, to answer the wishes of the public; and there are now maintained ONE HUNDRED INCURABLE PATIENTS, fifty of each sex, who enjoy every advantage which their deplorable state can admit. The number of patients in the house, who are supposed capable of being relieved, commonly amounts to about ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY, and of these, it has been found upon an average, that nearly two out of three are restored to their understanding. To such a degree of perfection have the liberal benefactions of the well-disposed (for it is by benefactions that the deficient revenues of this hospital have been, and must be supplied) advanced this noble institution! And such is the solid and substantial good, which it derives to individuals and to the community!

BUT



BUT while the benevolent heart feels a sensible joy in reflecting upon the load of human wretchedness that is lightened by the accommodations of this friendly mansion, it cannot but express a wish, that the benefits of the hospital might be rendered more extensive. It is an object much to be desired, that the many distracted persons, whose disorder no medicine can reach, might continue to find protection within these walls, and not be returned to their friends, a burthen, very often too heavy for them to bear. The number of incurables, which the hospital can at present contain, is small; when compared with those who wait their turn of admission. Perhaps it would not be supposed that there are generally more than TWO HUNDRED upon what is called the incurable list;\* and, as instances of longevity are frequent in insane persons, it commonly happens that the expectants are obliged to wait six or seven years, after their dismissal from the hospital, before they can be again received. During this long interval, they must be supported either by their respective friends, or parishes. The expence of maintaining and properly securing them far exceeds the allowance that is usually made for paupers; and in middling life, where the feelings of a worthy son or husband revolt at the idea of a near relation becoming an object of parochial alms, the distress and difficulties of the lunatic's unhappy friends must be greatly aggravated. Besides, for want of due care  
and

\* When a patient, after sufficient trial, is judged incurable, he is dismissed from the hospital, and if he is pronounced dangerous either to himself or others, his name is entered into a book, that he may be received in turn among the incurables maintained in the house, whenever a vacancy shall happen.



and security, accidents, far too shocking to be related, have sometimes happened.\*

THESE manifest evils, that arise from the want of a proper provision for so great a number of incurable patients, have induced many benevolent persons to wish, that, the hospital might be enlarged. Indeed, many have appropriated their benefactions solely to the incurables; and it is hoped that others will forward and complete their good intentions. True policy must join with humanity in the wish, that, this may not any longer be, what at present it is, almost the only branch of charity in this great city that wants a sufficient establishment. Besides, there seems a peculiar degree of generosity in assisting those who must burthen, but can never benefit society, and who, so far from recompensing, cannot even feel the least gratitude to their benefactors.†

THE

\* There are now in Bethlem hospital two patients who have committed deeds of the most horrid kind.

† It may not be improper here to rectify a mistaken notion that has gone forth into the world. It has been presumed by many, that the hospitals of BETHLEM, AND ST. LUKE are connected: the latter, it has been thought, is appointed for the reception of incurables discharged by the former; and so prevalent has been this opinion, that the steward of Bethlem hospital has often received letters from persons of education and credit, who were interested for patients discharged incurable, desiring to know, *when they would be sent to St. Luke's*. How such an idea could have obtained, except from the nearness of their situation to each other, it is not easy to say; certain it is, that it has not the least foundation in truth. Both hospitals are engaged in the same good work, have the same object in view, the restoration of reason to the distracted; and both admit a limited number of incurables; but the GOVERNORS, OFFICERS and FUNDS of each charity are totally SEPARATE and DISTINCT.



THE CONDUCT AND MANAGEMENT of this hospital is more immediately intrusted to a committee of forty-two governors, seven of whom, together with the treasurer, physician, and other officers, attend every Saturday, in monthly rotation, for the admission of patients, and for the regulation of such other matters, as may concern the ease, welfare, and convenience, of so large a family. And, as the committee is open to every governor, it receives all the benefit which it can derive from the prudence and information of persons of different habits of life, respectable citizens who are engaged in, or have retired from business, gentlemen of the medical profession, and others of independent fortune, whose leisure or benevolence may lead them to attend.

As soon as the lunatic is judged a fit object for this charity, he is delivered to the steward, who, under the direction of the physician, assigns him such a degree of care and confinement as his case may require. The wards are spacious and airy,\* and the convenience of the apartments allotted to each unhappy individual, together with the order, decency, and cleanliness that are conspicuous through the whole house, cannot but strike the curious and charitable visitant: and, though the various spectacles of wretchedness, which there present themselves, must agitate the mind that feels for the woes of humanity, the pain, which they occasion, will rarely fail of being mitigated by the view of that relief which is administered to the wretched.

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\* The length of each ward or gallery is 321 feet, the width 16 feet 2 inches, and the height 13 feet. There are 275 cells, each of which measures 12 feet 6 inches by 8 feet.



It is scarce necessary to assert, that the unhappy patients enjoy the ablest medical assistance administered with the greatest humanity.\* The provisions of the hospital, the vegetables, milk, beer, &c. are all excellent in their kind:† they are carefully inspected by the steward,‡ who is resident, and frequently viewed by gentlemen of the committee.

BUT perhaps an explanation of the regular plan of diet, established in this numerous household, may not prove unacceptable to those who deem no particulars trivial or uninteresting, that tend to alleviate human distress. The constant breakfast allotted the patients throughout the year, is water-gruel, with bread, butter and salt. They have meat for dinner three days in a week. Beef is the Sunday's fare; mutton is their Tuesday's dinner, and they have veal on Thursdays, but the last only from Lady-Day to Michaelmas; during the winter months, mutton or pork is substituted in its place. They have also a sufficient quantity of broth; and that every indulgence, which œconomy permits, may be given to the poor patients, on the meat days one gallery § is always gratified with roast meat. The quantity of solid meat, besides vegetables and a pint of small beer, allowed each individual, is eight ounces. On the days in which they have no meat, and which are called banyan days, they have milk-pot-

\* The physician to the hospital is Dr. MONRO, and the surgeon, Mr. RICHARD CROWTHER.

† The committee have lately allowed vegetables and a better sort of small beer. This liberality has produced the most salutary effects upon the general health of the patients, as the medical officers have observed, that the patients have not been since so much afflicted with scurvy, or fluxes as formerly.

‡ Mr. HENRY WHITE.

§ The house is divided into five.



pottage or rice-milk, with bread and cheese. Their constant supper is bread and cheese, with a pint of small beer; and twelve out of each gallery, in their turn, have butter if they prefer it.

THE cells are visited early every morning by the servants of the house: these make their report to the apothecary,\* who goes round about eight o'clock to inspect them himself, and to give such orders and directions as may be necessary. The physician visits the hospital three days in a week. There are certain days fixed for the proper medical operations; and the cold, or hot bath is used in those cases where it is judged to be salutary. Every patient is indulged with that degree of liberty which is found consistent with his own, and the general safety. In the winter there are certain rooms with comfortable fires,† where those, who are in a convalescent state, meet and associate; and in the summer, they walk in the large adjoining court-yards, and sometimes amuse themselves with such diversions as are deemed not improper to quiet their spirits, and compose the agitation of their minds. The hospital used formerly to derive a revenue, of at least £400 a year, from the indiscriminate admission of visitants, whom, very often, an idle and wanton curiosity drew to these regions of distress. But this liberty, though beneficial to the funds of the charity, was thought to counteract its grand design, as it tended to disturb the tranquillity of the patients. It was therefore judged proper, in the year 1770, no longer to expose the house to public view; and now, it is scarce ever open to strangers, unless they are introduced

\* Mr. JOHN GOZNA: he has apartments in the hospital, and is constantly resident.

† These to prevent mischief, are defended by large guard-irons.



duced by a particular order. The friends of the poor objects have a limited access to them. At the admission of a patient, a ticket is delivered, which authorizes the bearer of it to come to the hospital, on Mondays and Wednesdays, between the hours of ten and twelve. And here, it may not be amiss to contradict a most injurious notion, that has been adopted, chiefly indeed by that class of people, who are most prone to form prejudices against eleemosynary institutions, which is, that the patients in Bethlem hospital are beaten, and in other respects ill treated, in order to compel them to submit to the necessary operations. This idea is absolutely erroneous. No servant is allowed to wanton an abuse of the authority that is given him; and it is strictly enjoined, that, a patient shall never be struck, except in cases of self-defence. Indeed it is notorious, that, the members of this family are regarded with that lenity which their situation claims. If the known humanity and attention of the officers of the house were not itself a sufficient security for their being well treated, the frequent inspection which the hospital undergoes from a large proportion of the governors, who, at different times, serve upon the Bethlem committee, would at once invalidate the suspicion that has been mentioned. In short, such is the comfortable subsistence, kind treatment, and able medical aid, which the patients here meet with, that many, who are intimately acquainted with the conduct of the house, have declared, that if ever God should be pleased to visit them with insanity, BETHLEM HOSPITAL is the place, into which they would wish to be admitted.\*

THE

\* It is worthy of remark, that the patients themselves are often known to prefer Bethlem to private mad-houses.



THE ADMISSION OF PATIENTS into Bethlem hospital is attended with very little difficulty. It is first necessary to consider, whether the case of the supposed lunatic includes any of those circumstances which the prudence of the hospital regards as objections to admission. These are few in number; and the wisdom and propriety of them will be easily allowed. Mopes, persons afflicted with the palsy, or subject to convulsive or epileptic fits, and such as are become weak through age, or long illness, are excluded. Objects of this description, it is presumed, may be sufficiently protected and secured by their friends, or in a parish workhouse. It is peculiarly deserving notice that no person is considered as disqualified for admission here, who may have been discharged uncured from any other lunatic hospital. When the friends of a lunatic are satisfied that he is a proper object of the charity, and the petition and certificates of the patient's legal parish settlement are prepared,\* it then becomes necessary to procure a governor's recommendation. The hospital also requires, that, upon admission, two house-keepers residing in or near London, shall enter into a bond to take the patient away when discharged by the committee, and pay the expence of clothes, and of burial in case of death. If the lunatic is sent by a parish, or any other public body, the sum of three pounds four shillings is paid for bedding, but if he is placed there by friends, the hospital, anxious to lighten their burthen, reduces the sum to two pounds five shillings and six-

E pence

\* The forms of these are readily obtained by an application at Bethlem, or at the clerk's office in Bridewell hospital; and a governor's recommendation is *never refused* to the friends of any proper object.



pence.\* It is expected that the patient should be supplied with clothing; in failure of such supply, the hospital provides proper garments at the lowest rate, and the bondsmen repay the expence.†

THERE is no particular time limited for the continuance of a patient in the hospital, who is under cure. It is generally seen in a twelvemonth, whether the case will admit relief; and sometimes in a few months health and reason are restored. Nor does the care of the governors cease when the recovered lunatic is dismissed from the hospital. At the time of discharge, he is interrogated as to the treatment which he has received, and, if he has had cause of complaint, required to declare it. He is encouraged to apply occasionally to the medical officer, who gives him such advice and medicines as are proper to prevent a relapse, and, if it should appear that his circumstances are particularly distressing, the treasurer and physician possess a discretionary power to relieve him with a small sum of money at his departure.

HAPPY

\* When an incurable patient is finally settled in the house, the sum of half a crown per week is paid to the hospital by his friends, or the parish to which he belongs.

† BETHLEM HOSPITAL. Ordered, That the apparel wanting for the patients, may be provided by their friends; but, if not done, the steward shall furnish what the weekly committee shall order, at the following prices:

For M E N.							For W O M E N.						
A coat	—	—	—	—	—	£ 0 16 6	A blanket gown	-	—	—	—	£ 0 10 6	
A waistcoat	-	—	—	—	—	0 6 4	A gown and petticoat	-	—	—	—	0 19 0	
A pair of breeches		—	—	—	—	0 9 4	An under petticoat	—	—	—	—	0 3 3	
A shirt	-	—	—	—	—	0 3 11	A shift	—	—	—	—	0 3 4	
A pair of shoes	—	—	—	—	—	0 4 6	A pair of shoes	—	—	—	—	0 3 1	
A pair of stockings		—	—	—	—	0 2 3	A pair of stockings	—	—	—	—	0 1 10	
A cap	-	—	—	—	—	0 1 0	A cap	—	—	—	—	0 1 0	
A blanket gown	—	—	—	—	—	0 10 6	A handkerchief	—	—	—	—	0 1 3	
A strait waistcoat	-	—	—	—	—	0 13 6	An apron	—	—	—	—	0 2 2	
Buckles	-	—	—	—	—	0 0 8	Buckles	-	—	—	—	0 0 8	



HAPPY is it for the individual, for his friends, and, for society, when thus the divine blessing gives efficacy to the means used for his restoration! The wishes of the benevolent are gratified, and the success of the institution is so far complete! How then must we lament the case of the incurable lunatic, dismissed from the protection to which he had been accustomed, and thrown upon his distressed unfortunate friends!\* The hopes indeed of his return to his asylum are not entirely cut off, but the prospect of it is too remote to alleviate, in any degree, present suffering. A long period must elapse before he can be re-admitted. In the mean time the frantic maniac, and the desponding lunatic must be secured from doing violence to themselves, and others. The lowest annual expence, in those houses where parish objects are maintained, exceeds twenty pounds: where the forlorn being is supported by his friends, the expenditure scarce ever falls short of thirty. The feeling and considerate mind, that can judge of the œconomy which is requisite in humble life, and knows how to estimate its wants and necessities, will easily calculate the weight and effect of so heavy an expence;—will imagine how severe a struggle it must often occasion between necessity and pity, between natural affection and the pride of honest industry, which is sometimes reduced, by exertions too great for its ability, to accept itself that relief, which it had blushed to ask for the dearest relatives.

How glorious then would be the work! how comprehensive the charity, that should contribute to increase the establishment for incurable

\* The case is particularly hard when the patient, as it often happens, is sent to London from a remote county.



rable lunatics! The good, that would arise from the improvement of  
 so excellent an institution, is certain and undoubted, and from that  
 active spirit of humanity, and rational benevolence which peculiarly  
 adorns the British name, we may hope, that, this great work will not  
 be left defective and incomplete. The government of the royal hos-  
 pitals, as lately established by parliament, affords ample security to the  
 charitable benefactor, that his good intentions will receive their accom-  
 plishment.\* The wealthy and munificent CITY of LONDON, associ-  
 ated with the guardians of each charity, cherishes in her bosom, and  
 fosters with her care those endowments, which the liberality of HENRY,  
 and the piety of EDWARD committed to her administration.—  
 That this HAPPY UNION will operate to the relief of the distressed  
 poor, there can be little doubt. The friends of the hospital of Beth-  
 lem form the most sanguine expectations, that their ability to alleviate  
 the greatest of all human calamities will be enlarged and extended;  
 they hope to effect the purposes they have in view, and entertain full  
 confidence, that, the generous assistance of the opulent and the good,  
 will enable them, in an eminent degree, to LESSEN THE EVILS OF  
 HUMANITY.

### F I N I S.

\* A contest had long subsisted between the common-council of the city of London and the  
 acting governors of all the royal hospitals; the former claiming a right to be admitted govern-  
 ors in virtue of the several royal charters. This dispute has been happily settled by a compro-  
 mise which allows the admission of twelve of the common-council to each hospital. Application  
 was made to parliament in 1782, and a bill passed, which fully establishes this agreement, and  
 the friends of these noble charities have now the satisfaction to be assured that the government of  
 them is settled in a mode best calculated to promote their prosperity.